Memorandum on documentation efforts and intelligence gathering on world geopolitical activity to start 2026

By Karl M. Wright

January 5th 2026

The big geopolitical news headline to start 2026 has been the US invasion of Venezuela and the capture of Nicolás Maduro. Many world leaders have condemned the move on the grounds of the complete and utter disrespect of the sovereignty of Venezuela. US politicians have voiced similar concerns, as it fuels the apparent justification of powerful states to invade weaker states at will. The current US administration has subsequently said that leaders of Columbia and Cuba could be next. This of course would completely destabilize the entire region and the resulting armed conflicts would likely last for decades and leave the United States more vulnerable to attacks from any successful guerrilla groups.

Various political activist groups both in the United States and around the world have formed protests and marches against the American aggression. In the US, hundreds of groups have already taken to the streets to hold anti-war protests, in only one or two days of planning. Europe has also seen many protests pop up across the continent. The speed at which those opposed to the American aggression are planning and coordinating activism activities is something that would be almost unthinkable two years ago.

But perhaps the biggest mistake the United States has made in the aftermath of the Venezuela invasion is to double down on claims of invading Greenland. Since Greenland is a territory of Denmark, and since Denmark is a founding member of the NATO military alliance, all other NATO members guarantee Denmark's security and sovereignty. That includes any aggression by other NATO members, which quite frankly would be an astonishing breach of NATO agreements and norms.

France, as probably the most powerful military after the United States in the NATO alliance, would probably be tasked with leading any wars against the United States should it unwisely decide to destroy the NATO alliance that it once helped build. France possesses more than enough nuclear weapons to completely wipe the United States off the face of earth, and it would be a staggering irony if the United States ceases to exist because it got too aggressive and stabbed an ally in the back.

As far as can be told from available data, France has not threatened this outcome, and perhaps France is too diplomatic to even say such things. However, I'm an intelligence analyst not a diplomat, and so I have no reservations telling the Americans that they risk being annihilated in a nuclear fire if they attack a fellow NATO member. The American's belief in their own superiority is apparently an unquenchable fire of stupidity. Believing in disgraceful tactics of bullying and harassment is not only unbecoming of a once noble state like the US, it is foolish. The United States is not as powerful as it thinks it is, and only the alliances it has built over the course of the last 80 years is what has allowed the US to have the powerful position it is in. Continued aggression and bullying by the American administration will only further the unite the rest of the world against American, and at some point that could lead to very dire consequences for the American economy and US based corporations.

Latin American countries unfortunately don't have strong security guarantees against American aggression from bigger allies, but the threat of a destabilizing of the entire region should be enough to motivate other states to get involved. With continental destabilization comes mass migration and refugee relocation, and that would impact almost every other country on earth.

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2026 United States strikes in Venezuela

On 3 January 2026, the United States military attacked Venezuela, capturing sitting Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores.[10][11] The attack, codenamed **Absolute Resolve,** began around 02:00 a.m. local time when explosions were observed.[12] More than 150 United States Armed Forces airplanes were involved in the operation, which bombed infrastructure across northern Venezuela in support of an apprehension force that landed in the capital city of Caracas.[13][14] Venezuelan vice president Delcy Rodríguez denounced the capture as a kidnapping.[15]

According to Venezuelan and Cuban officials, more than 80 people were killed in the attack, including 32 Cuban military and intelligence members.[7][8] Maduro and Flores were flown to New York City by US forces.[16][17] US attorney general Pam Bondi announced that Maduro and Flores had been indicted in the US Southern District of New York on several charges related to narcoterrorism, superseding a 2020 indictment based on similar charges.[18][19] Maduro is to appear in a Manhattan federal court on 5 January 2026.[20]

Reactions around the world included protests and celebrations by the Venezuelan diaspora. The Trump administration justified the operation as a law-enforcement action with military support that the President has "inherent constitutional authority" to undertake,[21] but international law experts, officials in the United States, the United Nations (UN), and other countries questioned its legality.[22][23][24] US president Donald Trump stated that the United States would run Venezuela until there was a transition of power,[25][26] but these claims were contradicted by Rodríguez and later walked

Operation Absolute Resolve

Part of the crisis in Venezuela and the war on drugs

Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro aboard USS *Iwo Jima* (LHD-7) following his capture *(left)* · President Donald Trump with members of his cabinet during Operation Absolute Resolve *(right)*

Location	Northern Venezuela, including Caracas
Planned by	United States Department of Defense
Commanded by	Donald Trump
Target	Nicolás Maduro Cilia Flores
Date	3 January 2026 02:01 – 04:29[1] (VET, UTC−04:00)
Executed by	United States Armed Forces – United States Army[2] – – 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment – – Delta Force[3][4] – United States Marine Corps[2] – United States Navy[2] – United States Air Force[2] – United States Space Force[2] Central Intelligence Agency[5] Federal Bureau of Investigation[6] – Hostage Rescue Team[6]
Outcome	Nicolás Maduro and Cilia Flores captured by the US military
Casualties	80+ killed (according to an anonymous senior Venezuelan

back by US secretary of state Marco Rubio.[27][28] The Venezuelan government remained in place with Rodríguez becoming acting president of Venezuela, as ordered by the Supreme Tribunal of Justice.[15]

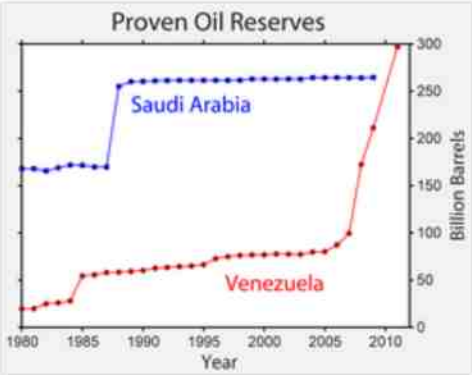
official),[7] including 32 Cuban military and security personnel (according to the government of Cuba)[8]

US: 2 soldiers injured (according to Trump)[9]

Background

Nicolás Maduro, who has been accused by critics of authoritarian rule since succeeding Hugo Chávez as President of Venezuela in 2013, was declared the winner of the 2024 presidential election by the National Electoral Council. This was described as fraudulent by international observers who also found statistical improbabilities in the results.[29][30][31][32] The opposition claimed its candidate, Edmundo González, had won a majority.[33] The Venezuelan government issued an arrest warrant for González, who left the country and was granted asylum in Spain.[34] As far back as 2020, Trump sought a regime change, pressuring Maduro to leave office.[35] At a 2023 press conference, Trump said, "Venezuela was about to collapse. We would have taken over it...[and] kept all that oil."[36] The Biden administration did not recognize the legitimacy of Maduro's administration after the 2024 election and recognized González in January 2025.[37]

Oil and mineral resources



President Trump expressed interest in controlling Venezuela's oil, saying "we're in the oil business, ... we'll be selling oil".[38] Venezuela has the largest proven oil reserves in the world.[39]

Venezuela holds the world's largest proven oil reserves, estimated at over 300 billion barrels or 17% of those.[40]. By December 2025, the U.S. began a maritime blockade, intercepting tankers carrying Venezuelan crude.[41] President Trump explicitly suggested that seized oil could be treated as a U.S. asset, asserting the willingness to sell it or add it to the USA strategic reserve.[42]

Following the raid, Trump's press conference made clear that oil was a core motivation for the operations against Venezuela.[43][44][45][46]

Citing Venezuela's oil restructurations of 1976 and 2007[47][48][49], Trump, Stephen Miller and other claimed that US oil companies were stolen from ownership of the Venezuelan oil industry. The 2025-2026 operations are seen by the Trump administration as serving the triple goals of crippling Maduro, hitting drug trade routes and getting access to Venezuela oil.[45]

The Trump administration also expressed interested in Venezuela's large deposits of gold and rare earth minerals. Some experts noted that the Maduro government had previously attempted to offer the U.S. access to these minerals in a failed attempt to stave off military action, with the ongoing operations marking a return to "resource imperialism".[50]

Indictment of Maduro

In addition to electoral fraud, the United States accused Maduro of presiding over a "narco-state".[51] In March 2020, during Trump's first term, the United States Justice Department indicted Maduro on cocaine-trafficking conspiracy charges, which Maduro denied.[37] In January and July 2025, Trump respectively designated two Venezuelan drug gangs, Tren de Aragua and Cartel of the Suns, as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs), and alleged that the latter was led by Maduro. Maduro denied being involved in cartel leadership and characterized the designations as an attempt to use the war on drugs for regime change.[33][37][52] Some Latin American crime experts have described the Cartel of the Suns as more of a general network of Venezuelan government and military corruption than as an organized group. Also in July 2025, a secret order instructed the US military to use force against cartels listed as terrorist organizations.[53][37]

United States military buildup

In August 2025, the United States began a military buildup in the southern Caribbean, deploying warships and military personnel.[54][55] The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) sent a team into Venezuela that began tracking Maduro's movements,[56] using a source close to the Venezuelan president. Plans were made for the capture of Maduro, taking months to complete. The Delta Force and other participants in the operation erected a mockup of a safe house—described by Trump as a "very highly guarded ... fortress"—in which Maduro was believed to be hiding.[5] At the same time, a circle of Venezuelan officials centered on Rodríguez and her brother Jorge privately outlined a roadmap for post-Maduro Venezuela, in which Rodríguez would act as figurehead and exiled general Miguel Rodríguez Torres would lead a "transitional government", dubbed "Madurismo without Maduro"; in return, Venezuela would welcome US investors, gradually loosening ties to rivals such as Iran and Russia. The Venezuelan proposals were made to US envoy Richard Grenell through Qatari channels. The Trump administration reportedly rejected the overtures.[57] In September, the United States Southern Command began conducting military strikes on vessels in the Caribbean Sea, alleging some were trafficking drugs on behalf of Venezuela.[58][59][60]

In November 2025, Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado promised to open Venezuela's oil and gas reserves during a business meeting in Miami attended by Trump, and the Trump administration engaged in secret talks with Maduro's government about its oil reserves.[61] In December 2025, this escalated to include seizures of oil tankers carrying Venezuelan crude, with the Coast Guard's Deployable Specialized Forces (DSF) conducting the tactical boardings in coordination with Department of Defense assets.[61][62][63] During this operation, Trump claimed that Venezuela's oil reserves had been stolen from the United States.[64][65] These seizures formed part of the broader blockade preceding the January 2026 operation.[63][66] The US also launched covert operations in Venezuela under the directive of the CIA in late December.[67] On 2 January, Trump had announced that the US military would conduct strikes inside Venezuela.[68]

In the weeks preceding the operation, an agreement was signed between the United States and Venezuela's island neighbor, Trinidad and Tobago, to allow US military access to its airports.[69] General Dan Caine, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in a 3 January press conference that the US military spent months planning and rehearsing the operation, with forces positioned and ready by early December.[14]

In late December, Maduro rejected an offer from the United States to go into exile in Turkey. At that time, the US had escalated its military efforts against Venezuela onto land, including striking a remote northern port reportedly used by Tren de Aragua for smuggling. According to the *The New York Times*, Maduro's public displays downplaying the seriousness of the American threats in the weeks before the operation, such as through public dancing on a stage to electronic music sampling one of his speeches in which he said "No crazy war", were a factor in Trump deciding to act on his administration's military threats.[70]

Strikes

According to Caine, Trump gave the order to proceed at 23:46 VET (22:46 EST) on 2 January.[14][71][72][73] The administration did not notify the United States Congress in advance of the strikes, saying they had concerns that this could endanger the mission.[74][75] At least seven explosions were reported at around 02:00 VET (01:00 EST), and low-flying aircraft were seen,[76] predominantly in La Guaira, Higuerote, Meseta de Mamo, Baruta, El Hatillo, Charallave, and Carmen de Uria, which are mostly inside or near the capital city Caracas.[12] The operation involved 150 aircraft,[23] which were from the United States Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps.[2] They included the Lockheed Martin F-22A Raptor, Lockheed Martin F-35A/C Lightning II, Boeing F/A-18E/F Super Hornet, Boeing EA-18G Growler, Grumman E-2D Hawkeye, Rockwell B-1B Lancer, Boeing CH-47F Chinook, Sikorsky CH-53K King Stallion, Bell UH-1Y Venom, Bell AH-1Z Viper, Boeing AH-64E Apache, Sikorsky UH-60M Black Hawk, refueling tankers, electronic-warfare (EW) planes,[5] other support aircraft, and numerous unmanned aerial vehicles including the Lockheed Martin RQ-170 Sentinel.[77][78] Trump said the United States "had a fighter jet for every possible situation".[5]

President Donald Trump (right) during Operation Absolute Resolve, alongside CIA Director John Ratcliffe (left)

Map of the US strikes on Venezuela

Most of the explosions targeted antennas and active military bases.[79] Early reports suggested that the explosions may have occurred at Generalissimo Francisco de Miranda Air Base (La Carlota) and Fort Tiuna, two military installations in the area.[80] Large explosions were also reported at Higuerote Airport.[79][81] Helicopters from the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment carried Delta Force soldiers into Caracas with air cover provided by the fighters and bombers. One helicopter was damaged by Venezuelan ground defenses but continued on its mission.[2] Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) personnel, including the Hostage Rescue Team, accompanied the military to formally arrest Maduro at his compound.[6]

The strikes lasted half an hour. Smoke was seen rising from one military hangar in a Caracas base, while another was left unpowered.[76] The strikes happened under the cover of darkness as a result of both the timing of the operation and the US military's disruption of power in the city of Caracas.[82] Multiple shipping containers were destroyed and damaged in the La Guaira port strikes.[83] Satellite imagery from Vantor showed at least five destroyed warehouses, burned vehicles, and a blown-up security post.[84][85]

An aircraft, believed to be a Beechcraft Baron, and a Buk-M2E Surface-to-Air Missile System were destroyed at Higuerote Airport.[86] Maduro declared a national state of emergency after the explosions began.[87] The Venezuelan government promised to defend against US military actions which it accused of seeking regime change. It described them as "imperialist aggression" and called for the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to be convened.[88]

Capture of Maduro

At 05:21 Venezuelan Standard Time (VET),[90][91] Donald Trump posted on the social media platform Truth Social that Maduro and Flores had been captured and flown out of the country.[a] Trump posted a photograph on his Truth Social account of Maduro on board USS *Iwo Jima*.[94] The photograph depicted Maduro blindfolded, wearing noise-cancelling headphones, a flotation device, and a gray fleece Nike Tech sweatsuit, and holding a plastic water bottle.[95] According to Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Maduro was arrested and would face criminal charges in the US.[83]

Map of Caracas and Fort Tiuna where Maduro and Flores were captured[89]

Delcy Rodríguez confirmed that both Maduro and Flores were missing and demanded "proof of life" via an audio message on state television.[96][97] According to Reuters sources, Rodríguez was in Russia on 3 January.[98] Other reports indicated that Rodríguez was in Caracas.[99]

The capture of Maduro was undertaken by Delta Force,[2] together with the CIA.[5]

Shortly before 18:00 VET (17:00 EST), the airplane carrying Maduro and Flores landed at Stewart Air National Guard Base in New York.[100] He was seen walking off the jet, surrounded by federal agents, before entering a hangar. He was then flown by helicopter to the Westside Heliport in Manhattan, New York City. He was taken by an armored convoy to a local Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) field office where he was processed before ultimately being held in the Metropolitan Detention Center.[85][101]

Legal proceedings

Hours after the capture, Bondi announced that Maduro and Flores had been indicted in the Southern District of New York on charges related to "narcoterrorism".[102] The indictment listed the charges as narco-terrorism conspiracy,[103] cocaine importation conspiracy,[104] possession of machine guns and destructive devices,[105] and conspiracy to possess machine guns and destructive devices.[106][107][108]

Maduro is scheduled to appear in a Manhattan federal court on 5 January 2026.[109]

Casualties

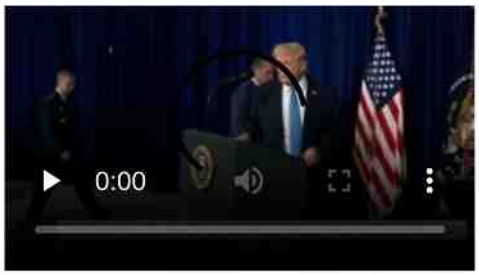
Maduro with Drug Enforcement Administration agents shortly after his arrival in New York.

Venezuelan defense minister Vladimir Padrino López said US combat helicopters fired rockets and missiles in urban areas and that officials were working to gather information on the number of fatalities and injuries.[110] Attorney General Tarek William Saab reported that "innocent victims have been mortally wounded and others killed by this criminal terrorist attack". In Catia La Mar, strikes hit a three-story civilian apartment complex, killing one person, seriously injuring another, and destroying the exterior wall.[23][111] The *New York Times* reported on 3 January that an anonymous Venezuelan official said at least 40 people, including civilians and military personnel, were killed in the attack.[112] On 4 January, the *Times* reported that, "according to a senior Venezuelan official", 80 civilians and members of security forces had been killed.[7] The same day, *Reuters* indicated that no official numbers were publicly released yet.[113] The government of Cuba reported that 32 Cubans were killed in Venezuela, all members of armed forces and intelligence services.[8][114]

First responders in La Guaira after the attack

Trump told the *New York Post* that Cuban forces were involved in the operation: "You know, many Cubans lost their lives last night. ... They were protecting Maduro. That was not a good move."[115][116] Trump said that two US soldiers were injured.[9] None of the injuries were life-threatening.[83]

Aftermath



President Trump addresses the nation on the airstrikes against Venezuela on 3 January 2026.

The government formerly led by Maduro remained in place.[117][118] Vice President Delcy Rodríguez described Maduro as Venezuela's "only president" and called for calm and unity to defend the country amid what she called his "kidnapping". She stated that Venezuela would "never again be a colony of any empire".[119] On 3 January, the Supreme Tribunal of Justice ordered Rodríguez to assume the presidency in the absence of Maduro.[120]

The US Federal Aviation Administration issued a notice to airmen on 3 January prohibiting US aircraft from operating within Venezuelan airspace, citing "ongoing military activity".[121][122] The US Embassy in Caracas issued a shelter-in-place order from its relocated operations in Colombia.[123] The southern area of

Caracas reportedly lost power.[124] Republican Senator Mike Lee said that Secretary of State Marco Rubio "anticipates no further action in Venezuela now that Maduro is in US custody."[125] He also said Maduro was expected to go on trial in the US.[125][126]

External videos

Maduro perp walk at New York City Drug Enforcement Administration Headquarters

https://x.com/PaulDMauro/status/2007624542156660903

At a press conference on 3 January 2026, President Trump stated: "We are going to run the country until such time as we can do a safe, proper and judicious transition".[127][128] He indicated that the US might send troops to Venezuela as part of this.[129] Trump also said that Rubio had made contact with Rodríguez and that she allegedly told Rubio, "We'll do whatever you need", and that she was gracious but "really doesn't have a choice";[130] Trump further opined that Rodríguez was "essentially willing to do what we think is necessary" to revive Venezuela,[131] marking a shift in the administration's stance compared to months prior, when the US excluded any settlement with Rodríguez.[57] Media outlets noted Rodríguez's statements contradicted Trump's.[118][129] The government formerly led by Maduro remained in place.[132] Trump also said that María Corina Machado, the leader of the opposition and 2025 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, did not have the necessary support or respect in the country to govern.[129][133]

Trump characterized the action as an application of the Monroe Doctrine, which he styled as the "Donroe Doctrine",[134] and added that "American dominance in the western hemisphere will never be questioned again."[135][136] Trump further stated that US oil companies would "go in, spend billions of dollars, fix the badly broken infrastructure, the oil infrastructure, and start making money for the country", and that the US was prepared to launch a second, much larger attack. He also expressed openness to a US occupation of Venezuela,[129] stating it would not cost the US anything because it would be reimbursed through revenue from Venezuela's oil reserves.[137]

On 4 January, Marco Rubio walked back Trump's comments of the day before, saying the US would not govern Venezuela, but would continue to enforce the existing oil quarantine in order to pressure for policy changes.[27] Rubio also affirmed that the US did not officially recognize Rodríguez' presidency, despite Trump's avowal that he would work with Rodríguez.[138] According to *The New York Times*, Vice President Rodríguez's economic record of increasing her country's oil production and stabilizing its economy despite harsher US sanctions in recent years and her reputation among Venezuelan and foreign business leaders as a technocrat, had earned the respect of American officials.[70] For her part, Rodríguez conveyed a offer to collaborate with US officials "within the framework of international law". Of Rodríguez, Trump contended that "she's cooperating", maintaining that he would demand "total access" by US oil interests.[139]

Reactions and response

Venezuela

Vice President Rodríguez leads an "emergency meeting" at Miraflores Palace following the US strikes in Venezuela, on 3 January 2026.

Before Maduro's capture, the Venezuelan government said it rejected and denounced the military aggression,[140][88][72][141] and issued a public statement blaming the US government for the strikes, which it attributed to a plan to seize Venezuelan resources, particularly oil reserves.[142][143] Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino López stated that the attacks were illegal.[85] He also said that Venezuela would resist foreign troops[144] and that the government had declared a "state of external commotion", a type of state of emergency, following "Maduro's orders".[145]

Vice President Delcy Rodríguez stated that Venezuela "will never again be anyone's colony – neither of old empires, nor of new empires, nor of empires in decline". She argued that the "war on drugs" was a pretext, claiming the United States' true objective was regime change and control of the country's "energy, mineral and natural resources".[129] Rodríguez also referred to the US attack on Venezuela as "Zionist".[146]

Unitary Platform politician María Corina Machado published a statement from exile, saying, "What had to happen" for the opposition to take up the mandate they claimed from the 2024 presidential election "is happening".[147] She also said the presidency should be assumed by Edmundo González, who received a majority of the vote in the 2024 presidential election, according to international observers and election-watchers.[148][149][150] González said the opposition was ready to "rebuild our nation" and that the next few hours would be "decisive".[116]

United States

According to Trump, the United States will "run" Venezuela until there is a "safe, proper and judicious transition", which, according to the *New York Times*, suggests a US occupation of Venezuela. Trump went on to say that the US and US companies will seize Venezuelan oil and sell it to other countries.[151] Trump said the United States will be "very strongly involved" in the Venezuelan oil industry[24] and that US oil companies will invest billions of dollars in the energy sector of the country.[152] Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth said "We are going to get American companies in there" for investment in the Venezuelan oil industry, resulting in "access to additional wealth and resources" for the US.[153][151][51] The government also indicated that American oil companies would have to invest in rebuilding Venezuelan oil infrastructure as a prerequisite for being compensated for previous asset seizures by the Venezuelan government since the first nationalization nearly 50 years ago.[154]

United States Vice President JD Vance said the operation was justified as Maduro was a wanted fugitive in the United States. He also declared that "the stolen oil must be returned".[155] Chairwoman Lisa McClain of the House Republican Conference called Maduro a "narcoterrorist" and that "Trump didn't

look the other way; he acted."[156] After initially expressing uncertainty about the justification of US actions, Republican senator Mike Lee later said they "likely" fell under the president's Article II powers to protect against "actual or imminent attack".[157][158]

Democratic senator Brian Schatz, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, warned against any US military involvement in Venezuela, saying that the United States has "no vital national interests in Venezuela to justify war".[157] Democratic senator Ruben Gallego said "this war is illegal".[159][160] Democratic senator Tim Kaine condemned the actions and called on Congress to support his resolution to block the use of the armed forces against Venezuela unless authorized by Congress.[74] Senator Bernie Sanders also condemned the strikes, citing a risk of global instability and accusing Trump of bypassing Congress to get the country into war.[161][162] Former vice president Kamala Harris criticized the strikes.[163] The mayor of New York City, Zohran Mamdani, said he called Trump earlier that day to express his opposition to the strikes.[151]

In a 3 January 2026, editorial, *The New York Times* Editorial Board condemned the attack as "dangerous and illegal", describing it as an act of "latter-day imperialism" which lacked "any semblance of international legitimacy, valid legal authority or domestic endorsement", and risked providing justification for other authoritarian governments wishing to dominate their neighbors. Comparing the attack to failed interventions in Libya, the war in Afghanistan, and US involvement in Nicaragua, it warned of the "potential for chaos in Venezuela", including violence from paramilitary groups such as the Venezuelan colectivos or the Colombian National Liberation Army (ELN), which operates in western Venezuela.[164]

On 5 January, Trump signaled an eagerness to apply pressure on neighboring Colombia, saying a similar operation to halt cocaine trafficking there might be in the works; Trump also criticized Colombia's president Gustavo Petro, saying he "likes making cocaine and selling it to the US" and would not stay in power much longer. (Trump had recently sanctioned the Colombian leader for his alleged reluctance to combat drug trafficking.) Colombia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement opposing Trump's remarks, calling them "an undue interference" in domestic politics.[165][166] Regarding Venezuela, Trump insisted that the U.S. was indirectly influencing the current regime, reiterating that "If they don't behave, we will do a second strike". He also threatened Mexico and Cuba, saying the two nations needed to do more to earn US favor, but said the latter might "fall" without US interference; he also expressed hope that Mexico would act on its own.[167]

International

Following the strikes, Venezuela's neighbors acted to contain fall-out. Colombian president Gustavo Petro ordered the mobilization of security forces along the Colombia–Venezuela border in anticipation of a mass influx of Venezuelan refugees,[168][169] while police in Trinidad and Tobago — which hosts the largest per-capita population of Venezuelan refugees and migrants[170] — cordoned off key areas of the capital, Port of Spain.[171] The government of Guyana, whose ongoing border dispute with Venezuela heated up in 2023–2024, had a muted response, but were broadly supportive of the removal of Maduro. Guyanese president Irfaan Ali announced that the country's security forces were "fully mobilised" to deal with potential refugees and an increase in instability along the border.[172]

The attack was condemned by other countries, including Chile,[173] Mexico,[174] Spain,[175] Brazil,[175] China,[176] France,[177] Iran,[178] North Korea,[179] South Africa,[180] and Russia.[181] Other world leaders such as Argentine President Javier Milei, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz,[182] French President Emmanuel Macron,[182] Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy,[183] Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu,[184] and Peruvian President José Jerí praised the developments, while United Kingdom Prime Minister Keir Starmer said that he was happy for the fall of Maduro, and he would wait to know the facts to comment further.[185][186] The president-elect of Chile, José Antonio Kast stated that Maduro was not the legitimate president of Venezuela, had "destabilized Latin America", called his capture "great news", and remarked that work remained and the "governments of Latin America must ensure that the entire apparatus of the regime relinquishes power and is held accountable".[187]

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres stated that US actions had "worrying implications for the region", "constitute[d] a dangerous precedent", and worried "that the rules of international law have not been respected".[188] At the request of Colombia, Russia, and China, the Security Council is to convene on 5 January to discuss the situation.[189] The government of Trinidad and Tobago, which has hosted US military personnel and vessels amid its recent buildup in the Caribbean Sea, stated that it did not participate in the attack.[190] Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez urged de-escalation, stating that "[i]nternational law and the principles of the U.N. Charter must be respected"; this was echoed by EU foreign policy chief and European Commission vice-president Kaja Kallas.[191][192]

The governments of Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Spain, Uruguay and the outgoing administration in Chile issued a joint statement rejecting the US action and expressed their concern saying that it can "constitute an extremely dangerous precedent for peace and regional security and endanger the civilian population".[193]

Protests and celebrations

Demonstrations both supporting and opposing Maduro's presidency occurred in Caracas.[194] CNN reported that some Venezuelans were celebrating while others were skeptical of Trump's motives and condemned the capture of Maduro as a "kidnapping".[195] On 4 January demonstrations against Maduro's capture occurred in Caracas, with demonstrators holding portraits of Maduro and pro-Maduro and pro-PSUV banners.[196]

Demonstration in Times Square against the attack

In the United States, hundreds of people gathered in New York City's Times Square to protest against the operation, with people chanting "Hands off Venezuela" and holding up signs that stated "US Out" and "No Blood for Oil".[197][198] Outside of New York, hundreds of people in different cities gathered to voice opposition to the strikes.[b]

Venezuelans in Santiago, Chile, celebrating Maduro's capture

Venezuelan migrants abroad celebrated the capture of Maduro in Doral, Florida, where the largest population of Venezuelans in the US live[211] and in Latin America and Spain, including cities like Santiago, Madrid, Lima, Buenos Aires and

Quito.[212][213][214][215] Videos from Cúcuta, Colombia, showed crowds filling the streets on the night of 3 January, dancing to music and chanting slogans like "virtue" and "a free Venezuela".[195]

World markets

Oil prices dropped sharply following the strikes and the removal of Maduro to the United States, according to analysis by the *Financial Times*.[216]

Analysis

Political

International Crisis Group (ICG) analyst Elizabeth Dickinson disputed the success of the operation, noting that the Maduro regime appeared largely intact, with figures characterized as "hardliners" by Dickinson, such as Diosdado Cabello, occupying key posts such as the ministries of defense and the interior. Dickinson concluded that "removing Maduro did not necessarily change the fundamental equation of control", adding that the government has withstood sanctions by rewarding its allies with access to scarce resources.[217] (Months prior, Trump had previously denied seeking a change of power in Venezuela, saying he was targeting regime-aligned cartels rather than Maduro himself.)[218] Trump's evident willingness to work with Rodríguez was criticized by Venezuelan opposition sectors.[131]

Another ICG analyst, Phil Gunson, quoted by WLRN-FM, cautioned anti-Maduro forces among the Venezuelan diaspora, reporting from Caracas that "There's no dancing in the streets here". Gunson stressed that he did not consider "regime change" to have been completed, suggesting a rivalry between Rodríguez and a conservative faction around Cabello. Gunson also intimated that efforts by the Trump administration to date seemed to have failed in pressing Venezuela into concessions, adding further that Trump may be counting on "a destructive fracturing" within the Venezuelan military. Gordon Institute for Public Policy director Brian Fonseca said that Trump may be more interested in retaining US economic influence in Venezuela than in regime change, especially in the oil industry, assessing that the US would need a force three or four times larger than deployed currently to carry out an invasion. Fonseca offered that regime insiders may have been willing to use Maduro as a pawn in dealings with the US, noting unexpectedly weak military resistance to the attacks, and said "some sort of power-sharing arrangement" between the regime and opposition seemed plausible.[219]

Some analysts and commentators drew parallels between the removal of Maduro and past US interventions, particularly the 1989 invasion of Panama to capture Manuel Noriega and the 2003 invasion of Iraq to depose Saddam Hussein, noting similar justifications (drug trafficking, undermining democracy), the targeting of defiant leaders, and debates over US interventionism.[c]

American political analyst David Rothkopf described President Trump's conduct as the "Putinization of US foreign policy".[225] However, Ryan C. Berg (director of the Americas Program and head of the Future of Venezuela Initiative at the Center for Strategic and International Studies) and Alexander B. Gray (nonresident senior fellow with the GeoStrategy Initiative at the Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security) highlighted that the action showed a robust commitment to the 2025 National Security Strategy (NSS) and a desire to increase preeminence in the Western Hemisphere, in turn signalling a "global reestablishment of deterrence" to countries such as China, alluding to the latter's

investments in Venezuela. Atlantic Council Counterterrorism Project head Alex Plitsas urged an orderly transition, warning that instability in Venezuela could lead to political fragmentation and criminal violence involving colectivo gangs; Berg elaborated that any systemic change would likely be lengthy, while reinforcing the Trump administration's "America First" agenda.[226][227]

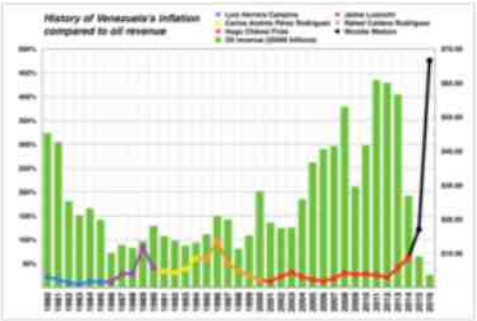
Legality

Trump has made several claims to justify the capture of Maduro. He alleged that Maduro had sent "savage and murderous gangs" including Tren de Aragua, to terrorize American communities. However, a fact check by *PBS* found no evidence that the Maduro government had sent members of Tren de Aragua to the US. Trump also alleged that Venezuela had stolen oil from the United States and stated that the US will now take it back. However a number of experts have stated there was no legal basis for this claim and that Venezuela did not steal oil from the US. Analysts point out that, under international law and the UN principle of permanent sovereignty over natural resources, Venezuela, as a sovereign state, has an "inherent right" to manage the resources within its own territory.[228][229]

Geoffrey Robertson stated that the strike on Venezuela was contrary to Article 2(4) of the UN Charter and qualifies as a crime of aggression under international law. Elvira Domínguez-Redondo, professor of international law at Kingston University, also stated the strike was an act of aggression and that it could only have been lawful if it had authorization by a United Nations Security Council resolution, or was justified as "self-defence", but she added that there was "no evidence whatsoever" to support either condition.[24]

Oil infrastructure

Experts estimate that some 303 billion barrels of oil, or about 17% of the world's reserves, were located in Venezuela.[230][231][232] However, the Orinoco Belt where the oil is concentrated consists of ultra-heavy crude, which is dense and viscous[232][233][234] and is used to make diesel, jet fuel, asphalt, and elements of petrochemicals.[233]



Venezuela's hyperinflation in the mid-2010s hit revenue from oil exports which magnified the decline of the industry

Venezuela's oil industry had been in decline since Hugo Chávez's wave of expropriations,[234][235]:2–3[236] during which former oil contracts were migrated to joint ventures with the state-owned Petróleos de Venezuela S.A. (PDVSA) and new fiscal rules were imposed.[232][235]:2,4–5[237] Legal instability and other risks drove away investors, which Venezuela could not compensate for because of its over-reliance on PDVSA's "inefficient operations, economic instability, discretionary policies, and poor investor protection,"[235]:8–9[237] worsened by US sanctions on the company since 2017.[235]:7 In this time, the industry's oil infrastructure declined.[232][234][238] Analysts, experts, and those in the industry believed reconstruction could cost billions of dollars and take upwards of two to seven years,[234][239] requiring risky investment and a lengthy process of creating contracts.[240][241]

See also

Venezuela portal

United States portal

2020s portal

- 1953 Iranian coup d'état § United States' role
- 1954 Guatemalan coup d'état
- 1973 Chilean coup d'état § US involvement
- 2004 Haitian coup d'état § US involvement
- American expansionism under Donald Trump
- Assassination of Qasem Soleimani (2020)
- Axis of Unity
- Bay of Pigs Invasion (1961)
- Capture of Saddam Hussein
- Operation Condor (1975–1983)
- Dominican Civil War § US intervention (1965)
- Death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (2019)
- Foreign interventions by the United States
- Iran–Contra affair (1985–1987)
- Killing of Osama bin Laden (2011)
- List of heads of state and government deposed by foreign powers in the 20th and 21st century
- United States invasion of Grenada (1983)
- United States invasion of Panama (1989)
- United States involvement in regime change in Latin America
- United States strikes on Iranian nuclear sites (2025)
- United States–Venezuela relations

Notes

a. Attributed to multiple sources:[92][93][90]

b. Attributed to multiple sources:[199][200][201][202][203][204][205][206][207][208][209][210]

c. Attributed to multiple sources:[220][221][222][223][224]

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External links

- Court docket: *United States v. Carvajal-Barrios (https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/72102079/united-states-v-carvajal-barrios/)* (S.D.N.Y.), 1:11-cr-00205; second superseding indictment (https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/72102079/260/united-states-v-carvajal-barrios/) against Maduro and others

Retrieved from "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=2026_United_States_strikes_in_Venezuela&oldid=1331289401"

U.S. SENATOR
Patty Murray

(https://www.murray.senate.gov)

January 3, 2026

Senator Murray Responds to Trump's Illegal Military Operation, Address to the Nation

Senator Murray: "It is outrageous for a President who is tanking our economy here at home to suggest that the American taxpayer spend a fortune to 'run' another country while doing nothing to make life better in

America. I opposed the war in Iraq from the outset—and the parallels here are glaring. I will similarly oppose any war in Venezuela. I refuse to put the lives of servicemembers at further risk, and I refuse to saddle our children with yet another costly war for no good reason."

Washington, D.C. — Today, U.S. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), Vice Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, issued the following statement in response to President Trump unilaterally launching a regime change war in Venezuela, where he ordered strikes on multiple military targets in the country and seized Nicolás Maduro of Venezuela along with his wife Cilia Flores.

"The American people didn't ask to start a war with Venezuela. They didn't ask for an indefinite and costly occupation of another country and they didn't ask for 'boots on the ground,' their sons and daughters put in harm's way. All they asked for were lower prices at the grocery store. Only Congress can authorize war and I absolutely will not support a large-scale military conflict in Venezuela or a dangerous and expensive occupation. What the President has done is unconstitutional, reckless, and will have far-reaching effects well beyond last night's strikes.

"The President has provided no legitimate justification for these unauthorized strikes nor any kind of long-term strategy for how he will deal with the fallout of this slapdash regime change—and he must now explain his unhinged statements that we will 'run' Venezuela. The American people can see for themselves how dishonest and cynical this entire venture is—we're supposed to believe drug trafficking warrants the use of military force to topple a foreign government in one instance and then merits a full pardon for the former President of Honduras who was lawfully convicted of the same crime? And we should all be eyes wide open about the potential for self-enrichment and corruption by the Trump administration when it comes to profiting off Venezuela's oil. This is not about law and order, because if it were, Trump wouldn't have withheld these plans from Congress, and it is not about actually helping Americans suffering from drug addiction.

“Maduro is a corrupt and oppressive dictator—that much has always been clear. But what stops China or Russia from making similar claims about foreign leaders they don’t like and then using military force to overthrow them? This kind of careless use of military force threatens serious global instability—and none of that is good for Americans here at home.

“There needs to be serious oversight and accountability here. Trump administration officials must come before Congress and publicly explain their rationale and—importantly—just what exactly they think happens next here. Republican leaders should not just shrug their shoulders and let the President bomb whoever he wants on hardly more than a whim—they must join Democrats in pressing for serious accountability and insisting that the use of military force be authorized by Congress.

“If this escalates into a prolonged conflict of any sort, you can bet it won’t be Trump’s family putting their lives on the line—the American people do not want to be dragged into another costly foreign war with no real justification. It is outrageous for a President who is tanking our economy here at home to suggest that the American taxpayer spend a fortune to ‘run’ another country while doing nothing to make life better in America. I opposed the war in Iraq from the outset—and the parallels here are glaring. I will similarly oppose any war in Venezuela. I refuse to put the lives of servicemembers at further risk, and I refuse to saddle our children with yet another costly war for no good reason.”

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← (https://www.murray.senate.gov/se

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NATO member countries

Updated: 11 March 2024

At present, NATO has 32 member countries. These countries, called NATO Allies, are sovereign states that come together through NATO to discuss political and security issues and make collective decisions by consensus.

- NATO was created by 12 countries from Europe and North America on 4 April 1949.
- Since then, 20 more countries have joined NATO through 10 rounds of enlargement (in 1952, 1955, 1982, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2017, 2020, 2023 and 2024).
- Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty sets out how countries can join the Alliance. It states that membership is open to any "European State in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area".
- Any decision to invite a country to join the Alliance is taken by the North Atlantic Council, NATO's principal political decision-making body, on the basis of consensus among all Allies.

Alphabetical list of NATO member countries

Albania
2009

Belgium
1949

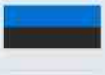
Bulgaria
2004

Canada
1949

Croatia
2009

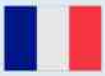
Czechia
1999

Denmark
1949



Estonia
2004

Finland
2023



France
1949

Germany
1955

Greece
1952

Hungary
1999

Iceland
1949

Italy
1949

Latvia
2004

Lithuania
2004

Luxembourg
1949

Montenegro
2017

North Macedonia
2020

Norway
1949

Poland
1999

Portugal
1949

Romania
2004

Slovakia
2004

Slovenia
2004

Spain
1982

Sweden
2024

The Netherlands
1949

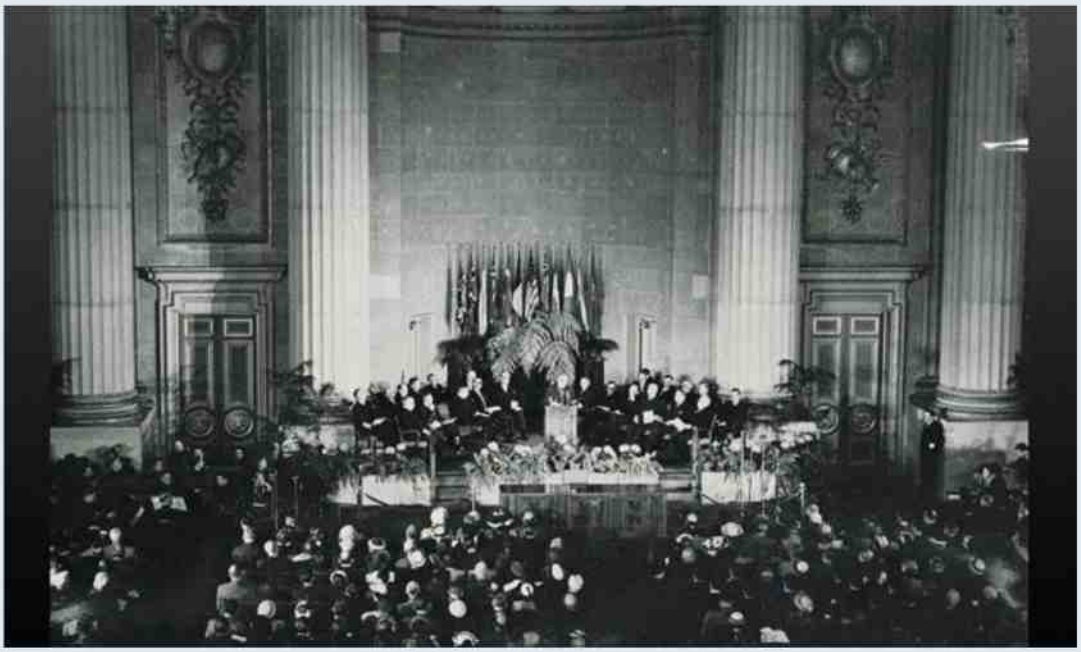
Türkiye
1952

United Kingdom
1949

United States
1949

How each country became a NATO member

1949 - The 12 founding members



Twelve countries from Europe and North America signed the North Atlantic Treaty on 4 April 1949 in Washington, D.C.

On 4 April 1949, the Foreign Ministers from 12 countries signed the North Atlantic Treaty (also known as the Washington Treaty) at the Departmental Auditorium in Washington, D.C.

NATO's founding member countries were: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Within the five months following the signing ceremony, the Treaty was

ratified by the parliaments of all 12 countries, sealing their membership.

The 12 signatories

Some of the Foreign Ministers who signed the Treaty were heavily involved in NATO's work at a later stage in their careers:

- **Belgium**: M. Paul-Henri Spaak served as NATO Secretary General from 1957 to 1961.
- **Canada**: Mr Lester B. Pearson negotiated the Treaty and was one of the "Three Wise Men" who drafted the report on non-military cooperation in NATO, published in 1956 in the wake of the Suez Crisis.
- **Denmark**: Mr Gustav Rasmussen
- **France**: M. Robert Schuman was a key architect of the European institutions, who also initiated the idea of a European Defence Community.
- **Iceland**: Mr Bjarni Benediktsson
- **Italy**: Count Carlo Sforza
- **Luxembourg**: M. Joseph Bech
- **The Netherlands**: Dr D.U. Stikker served as NATO Secretary General from 1961 to 1964.
- **Norway**: Mr Halvard M. Lange was one of the "Three Wise Men" who

drafted the report on non-military cooperation in NATO.

- **Portugal**: Dr José Caeiro da Matta
- **United Kingdom**: Mr Ernest Bevin was a main driver behind the creation of NATO and, as Foreign Secretary from 1945 to 1951, he attended the first formative meetings of the North Atlantic Council.
- **United States**: Mr Dean Acheson attended and chaired meetings of the North Atlantic Council, which was particularly important before the creation of the position of NATO Secretary General in 1952.

Flexibility of NATO membership

On signing the Treaty, countries voluntarily commit themselves to participating in the political consultations and military activities of the Organization. Although each and every signatory to the North Atlantic Treaty is subject to the obligations of the Treaty, there remains a certain degree of flexibility, which allows members to choose how they participate. The memberships of Iceland and France, for instance, illustrate this point.

Iceland

When Iceland signed the Treaty in 1949, it did not have – and still does not have – armed forces. There is no legal impediment to forming them, but Iceland has chosen not to have any. However, Iceland has a Coast Guard, national police forces, an air defence system and a

voluntary expeditionary peacekeeping force. Since 1951, Iceland has also benefitted from a long-standing bilateral defence agreement with the United States. In 2006, US forces were withdrawn but the defence agreement remains valid. Since 2008, air policing has been conducted on a periodic basis by NATO Allies.

France

In 1966, President Charles de Gaulle decided to withdraw France from NATO's integrated military structure. This reflected the desire for greater military independence, particularly vis-à-vis the United States, and the refusal to integrate France's nuclear deterrent or accept any form of control over its armed forces.

In practical terms, while France still fully participated in the political structures of the Organization, it was no longer represented on certain committees, for instance, the Defence Planning Committee and the Nuclear Planning Group. This decision also led to the removal of French forces from NATO commands and foreign forces from French territory. The stationing of foreign weapons on French territory, including nuclear weapons, was also banned. NATO's political headquarters (based in Paris since 1952), as well as the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe or SHAPE (in Rocquencourt since 1951) moved to Belgium.

Despite France's withdrawal from NATO's integrated military structure, two technical agreements were signed with the Alliance, setting out

procedures in the event of Soviet aggression. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, France has regularly contributed troops to NATO's military operations, making it one of the largest troop-contributing states. It is also NATO's fourth-biggest contributor to the military budget.

From the early 1990s onwards, France distanced itself from the 1966 decision with, for instance, its participation at the meetings of Defence Ministers from 1994 (Seville) onwards and the presence of French officers in Allied Command Operations and Allied Command Transformation structures from 2003. At NATO's Strasbourg/Kehl Summit in April 2009, France officially announced its decision to fully participate in NATO structures.[1]

1. However, France has chosen not to become a member of NATO's Nuclear Planning Group.

1952 - The accession of Greece and Türkiye

The flags of Greece and Türkiye are raised alongside those of the other NATO Allies at the Ministerial Meeting in Lisbon, Portugal in February 1952.

Three years after the signing of the Washington Treaty, on 18 February 1952, Greece and Türkiye joined NATO. This enabled NATO to reinforce its southern flank.

At a time when there was a fear of communist expansion throughout Europe and other parts of the world (for example, Soviet support of the North Korean invasion of South Korea in 1950), extending security to south-eastern Europe was strategically important. Not only did NATO membership curb communist influence in Greece – a country recovering from civil war – but it also relieved Türkiye from Soviet pressure for access to key strategic maritime routes.

1955 - The accession of Germany

The Allies sign the Accession Protocol for Germany at NATO Headquarters, which was formerly located in Paris, in October 1954. Germany joined the Alliance in May of the following year.

Germany became a NATO member on 6 May 1955. This was the result

of several years of deliberations among western leaders and Germany, whose population opposed any form of rearmament.
Following the end of the Second World War, finding ways of integrating the Federal Republic of Germany into western European defence structures was a priority. The Federal Republic of Germany – or West Germany – was created in 1949 and although the new state was anchored to the west, its potential was feared. Initially, France proposed the creation of a European Defence Community – a European solution to the German question. However, the French Senate opposed the plan and the proposal fell through, leaving NATO membership as the only viable solution. Three conditions needed to be fulfilled before this could happen: post-war victors (France, the United Kingdom, the United States and the Soviet Union) had to end the occupation of the Federal Republic of Germany; Italy and West Germany needed to be admitted to the Western Union Defence Organisation (the military agency of the Western Union); and then there was the accession procedure itself.

When Germany joined the Western Union, the latter changed its name to become the Western European Union. This accession, together with the termination of the Federal Republic of Germany's status as an occupied country, was bringing the country closer to NATO membership. The Federal Republic of Germany officially joined the Western Union on 23 October 1954 and its status as an occupied country came to an end when the Bonn-Paris conventions came into effect on 5 May 1955. The next day, it became NATO's 15th member country.

With the reunification of Germany on 3 October 1990, the Länder of the former German Democratic Republic joined the Federal Republic of Germany in its membership of NATO.

1982 - The accession of Spain

The Spanish flag flies alongside those of the other Allies at NATO Headquarters in Brussels shortly after Spain's accession to the Alliance in 1982.

Spain joined the Alliance on 30 May 1982 despite considerable public opposition. The end of Franco's dictatorship in 1975, the military coup in 1981 and the rise of the Socialist Party (PSOE, the leading opposition party which was initially against NATO accession), made for a difficult social and political context, both nationally and

internationally.

Spain fully participated in the political structures of the Organization, but refrained from participating in the integrated military structure – a position it reaffirmed in a referendum held in 1986. With regard to the military aspects, it was present as an observer on the Nuclear Planning Group; reserved its position on participation in the integrated communication system; maintained Spanish forces under Spanish command and did not accept to have troops deployed outside of Spain for long periods of time. Nevertheless, Spanish forces would still be able to operate with other NATO forces in an emergency.

Spain's reservations gradually diminished. The Spanish Parliament endorsed the country's participation in the integrated military command structure in 1996, a decision that coincided with the nomination of Dr Javier Solana as NATO's first Spanish Secretary General (1995-1999).

1999 - The first wave of post-Cold War enlargement

A military band performs at the flag-raising ceremony for Czechia, Hungary and Poland at NATO Headquarters in Brussels in March 1999.

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact after the end of the Cold War opened up the possibility of further NATO enlargement. Some of the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe were eager to become integrated into Euro-Atlantic institutions.

In 1995, the Alliance carried out and published the results of a Study on NATO Enlargement that considered the merits of admitting new members and how they should be brought in. It concluded that the end of the Cold War provided a unique opportunity to build improved security in the entire Euro-Atlantic area and that NATO enlargement would contribute to enhanced stability and security for all.

Czechia, Hungary and Poland were invited to begin accession talks at the Alliance's Madrid Summit in 1997 and on 12 March 1999 they became the first former members of the Warsaw Pact to join NATO.

Drawing heavily on the experience gained during this accession process, NATO launched the Membership Action Plan - or MAP - at the Washington Summit in April 1999. The MAP was established to help countries aspiring to NATO membership in their preparations, even if it did not pre-judge any decisions.

2004 - The second wave of post-Cold War enlargement

The flags of all NATO Allies are paraded in front of NATO Headquarters in Brussels in April 2004 during the flag-raising ceremony marking the accession of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia

and Slovenia.

Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia were invited to begin accession talks at the Alliance's Prague Summit in 2002. On 29 March 2004, they officially became members of the Alliance, making this the largest wave of enlargement in NATO history. All seven countries had participated in the MAP before acceding to NATO.

2009 - The accession of Albania and Croatia

Allied troops carry their respective national flags during the flag-raising ceremony for Albania and Croatia at NATO Headquarters in

Brussels in April 2009.

When they were partners, Albania and Croatia worked with NATO in a wide range of areas, with particular emphasis on defence and security sector reform, as well as support for wider democratic and institutional reform.

Albania had participated in the MAP since its inception in 1999 and Croatia joined in 2002. In July 2008, they both signed Accession Protocols and became official members of the Alliance on 1 April 2009.

2017 - The accession of Montenegro

Montenegrin honour guards raise NATO's and Montenegro's flags in

Podgorica, Montenegro to mark the country's accession to NATO in June 2017. © Reuters/Stevo Vasiljevic

Shortly after regaining its independence in June 2006, Montenegro joined the Partnership for Peace in December of the same year and the Membership Action Plan three years later. It actively supported the NATO-led operation in Afghanistan from 2010 and provided support to the follow-on mission. Developing the interoperability of its forces and pursuing defence and security sector reforms were an important part of the country's cooperation with NATO before it became a member country. It also worked with NATO in areas such as the development of emergency response capabilities and the destruction of surplus munitions.

The Accession Protocol was signed in May 2016 and Montenegro became a member of the Alliance on 5 June 2017.

2020 - The accession of North Macedonia

North Macedonia's officers raise their country's flag at NATO Headquarters in Brussels following the country's accession to the Alliance in March 2020.

North Macedonia became independent in 1991 and joined NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme in 1995 and the Membership Action Plan in 1999. For a short period between 2001 and 2003 and on the request of Skopje, NATO conducted three peace-support operations in the country. Before becoming a member of the Alliance, North Macedonia cooperated with NATO in key areas such as democratic, institutional, security sector and defence reforms. It also reinforced its civil preparedness capabilities through practical cooperation with NATO and actively supported the NATO-led operation in Afghanistan.

The major stumbling block to membership of the Alliance was the issue of the country's name. A historic agreement was struck between

Athens and Skopje in 2018, resolving this issue. The Prespa Agreement enabled NATO to invite Skopje to begin accession talks to join the Organization, while encouraging the government to continue implementing reforms. On 15 February 2019, the country, which was previously known as the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was officially recognised as the Republic of North Macedonia. On 27 March 2020, it became NATO's 30th member.

2023 – The accession of Finland

Finnish officers raise Finland's flag at NATO Headquarters in Brussels in April 2023. © Reuters/Johanna Geron/Pool

NATO's cooperation with Finland began when it joined the Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme in 1994. Over the subsequent decades, Finland became one of NATO's most active partners and a valued contributor to the Alliance's activities, including NATO-led operations and missions in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq.
Finnish cooperation with NATO was historically based on its policy of military non-alignment and a firm national political consensus. This changed in 2022, following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

On 18 May 2022, Finland submitted its official letter of application to become a NATO Ally, alongside Sweden. At the 2022 NATO Summit in Madrid on 29 June, Allied Leaders agreed to invite both countries to become members of NATO. Together with Sweden, Finland completed accession talks at NATO Headquarters in Brussels on 4 July, confirming its willingness and ability to meet the political, legal and military obligations and commitments of NATO membership. On 5 July, Allies signed the Accession Protocols for both countries, which then became official Invitees, attending NATO meetings as such.

Over the following months, all NATO Allies ratified Finland's Accession Protocol according to their national procedures. Finland deposited its Instrument of Accession to the North Atlantic Treaty on 4 April 2023, becoming NATO's 31st member country.

2024 – The accession of Sweden

Swedish officers raise Sweden's flag at NATO Headquarters in Brussels in March 2024.

Sweden followed a similar path to NATO membership as Finland: joining the Partnership for Peace programme in 1994, contributing extensively to NATO activities as a close partner for almost three decades, and reversing its policy of military non-alignment following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.
Alongside Finland, Sweden submitted its official letter of application on 18 May 2022; received the invitation to become a NATO member from Allied Leaders at the Madrid Summit on 29 June; completed accession talks on 4 July; and became an official Invitee on 5 July, when Allies signed the Accession Protocols for both countries.

Over the following months, all NATO Allies ratified Sweden's Accession Protocol according to their national procedures. Sweden deposited its Instrument of Accession to the North Atlantic Treaty on 7 March 2024,

becoming NATO's 32nd member country.

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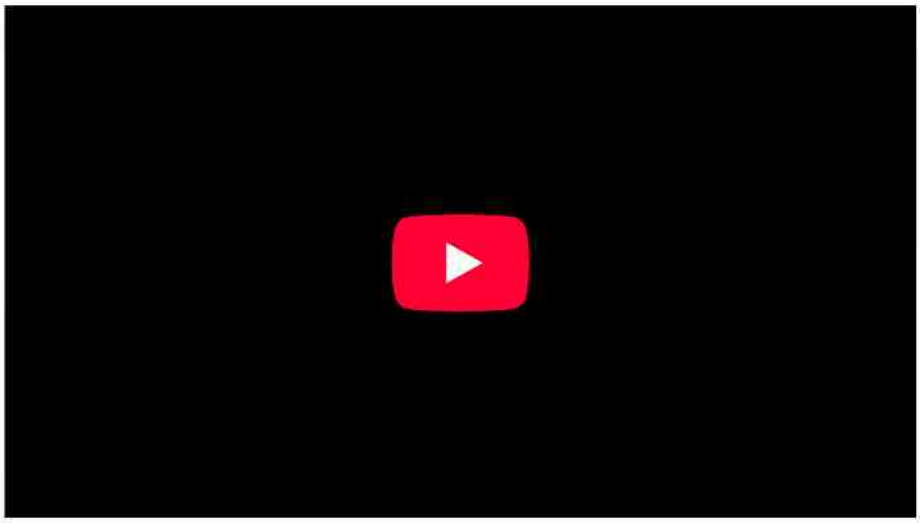

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France and weapons of mass destruction

France is one of the five nuclear-weapon states recognized by the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) but is not known to possess or develop any chemical or biological weapons.[4][5] France is the only member of the European Union to possess nuclear weapons.

France was the fourth country to test a nuclear weapon, in 1960, and tested its first thermonuclear weapon in 1968. Charles de Gaulle was influential in the country's decision to develop both weapons and nuclear forces. France is also believed to have tested neutron bomb designs. The forces were developed in the late 1950s and 1960s to give France the ability to distance itself from NATO while still deterring the Soviet Union. France remains the only NATO member to not participate in its Nuclear Planning Group. France was the last of the five NPT-recognized nuclear-weapon states to ratify the treaty, in August 1992.[6]

As of 2025, the stockpile country's nuclear forces, the *force de dissuasion* is estimated at 290[7] deployed nuclear warheads, making it the fourth-largest in the world numerically.[8] Of these 290, approximately 240 are assigned to 48 MIRV-capable M51 submarine-launched ballistic missiles aboard its four *Triomphant*-class submarines. The remaining 50 are assigned to Dassault Rafale fighters armed with ASMP-A air-launched cruise missiles. Of these, 40 are assigned to land-based fighters, and 10 are in central storage for rapid deployment to the aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle*.[9] France possessed land-based intermediate-range ballistic missiles, the S2 and S3, between 1971 and 1996, in silos at the Apt-Saint-Christol air base. France plans to upgrade its nuclear forces with the ASN4G hypersonic air-launched cruise missile and SNLE 3G submarines.

France carried out the Reggane and In Ekker series of nuclear tests in Algeria between 1960 and 1966. France did not sign the 1963 Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty,

French Republic

Nuclear program start date	26 December 1954
First nuclear weapon test	February 13, 1960
First thermonuclear weapon test	August 24, 1968
Last nuclear test	January 27, 1996
Largest yield test	**2.6 Mt** (August 24, 1968)
Total tests	210
Peak stockpile	540 (1992)
Current stockpile	~290 warheads (2023)[1]
Current strategic arsenal	**~290** warheads (2024)[2]
Cumulative strategic arsenal in megatonnage	**~51.6**[3]
Maximum missile range	~8000-10000km/5000-6250mi (M51 SLBM)
NPT party	**Yes** (1992, one of five recognized powers)

and alongside China, continued conducting atmospheric nuclear tests. These occurred at Moruroa and Fangataufa atolls in French Polynesia, from 1966 to 1974, when they moved to underground testing.[10] Its testing in both regions was controversial, with residents seeking compensation for fallout exposure. France conducted its last nuclear test in January 1996, and signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in September 1996, ratifying it in 1998. [11]

France is not believed to possess biological or chemical weapons, becoming party to the Biological Weapons Convention in 1984, and the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1995. France, alongside other major participants, used chemical warfare in World War I. Beginning with a tear gas in 1914, and transitioning to phosgene. France ratified the Geneva Protocol in 1926. France possessed phosgene and mustard gas stockpiles during World War II but no chemical warfare took place on the Western Front. France may also have investigated potato beetle entomological warfare during the war. After the war, France captured tabun nerve agent from Nazi Germany, and tested it at a site in French Algeria. During the Cold War, France had a chemical weapons stockpile and infrastructure. It is believed to have destroyed its stockpile sometime before 1989.

History

France was one of the nuclear pioneers, going back to the work of Marie Skłodowska Curie and Henri Becquerel. French Professor Frédéric Joliot-Curie, High Commissioner for Atomic Energy from 1945 to 1950 and Curie's son in law, told the *New York Herald Tribune* that the 1945 Smyth Report wrongfully omitted the contributions of French scientists.[12]

After World War II France's former position of leadership suffered greatly because of the instability of the Fourth Republic, and the lack of finance available.[13] During the Second World War Bertrand Goldschmidt invented the now-standard method for extracting plutonium while working as part of the British/Canadian team participating in the Manhattan Project. But after the Liberation in 1945, France had to start its own program almost from scratch. Nevertheless, the first French reactor went critical in 1948 and small amounts of plutonium were extracted in 1949. There was no formal commitment to a nuclear weapons program at that time, although plans were made to build reactors for the large scale production of plutonium.[14] Francis Perrin, French High-Commissioner for Atomic Energy from 1951 to 1970, stated that from 1949 Israeli scientists were invited to the Saclay Nuclear Research Centre, this cooperation leading to a joint effort including sharing of knowledge between French and Israeli scientists especially those with knowledge from the Manhattan Project,[15][16][17] the French believed that cooperation with Israel could give them access to international Jewish nuclear scientists.[18] According to Lieutenant Colonel Warner D. Farr in a report to the USAF Counterproliferation Center while France was previously a leader in nuclear research "Israel and France were at a similar level of expertise after the war, and Israeli scientists could make significant contributions to the French effort. Progress in nuclear science and technology in France and Israel remained closely linked throughout the early fifties. Farr reported that Israeli scientists probably helped construct the G-1 plutonium production reactor and UP-1 reprocessing plant at Marcoule."[19]

However, in the 1950s a civilian nuclear research program was started, a byproduct of which would be plutonium. In December 1954, Prime Minister Pierre Mendès France met with his cabinet, authorizing the foundation of a program with the goal of developing French nuclear weapons.[14] In 1956 a secret Committee for the Military Applications of Atomic Energy was formed and a development program for

delivery vehicles was started. The intervention of the United States in the Suez Crisis that year is credited with convincing France that it needed to accelerate its own nuclear weapons program to remain a global power.[20] As part of their military alliance during the Suez Crisis in 1956 the French agreed to secretly build the Dimona nuclear reactor in Israel and soon after agreed to construct a reprocessing plant for the extraction of plutonium at the site. In 1957, soon after Suez and the resulting diplomatic tension with both the Soviet Union and the United States, French president René Coty decided on the creation of the C.S.E.M. in the then French Sahara, a new nuclear testing facility replacing the CIEES.[21]

In 1957 Euratom was created, and under cover of the peaceful use of nuclear power the French signed deals with West Germany and Italy to work together on nuclear weapons development.[22] The Chancellor of West Germany Konrad Adenauer told his cabinet that he "wanted to achieve, through EURATOM, as quickly as possible, the chance of producing our own nuclear weapons".[23] The idea was short-lived. In 1958 de Gaulle became president and Germany and Italy were excluded.

With the return of Charles de Gaulle to the presidency of France in the midst of the May 1958 crisis, the final decisions to build an atomic bomb were taken, and a successful test took place in 1960 with Israeli scientists as observers at the tests and unlimited access to the scientific data.[24] Following tests de Gaulle moved quickly to distance the French program from involvement with that of Israel.[25] Since then France has developed and maintained its own nuclear deterrent, one intended to defend France even if the United States refused to risk its own cities by assisting Western Europe in a nuclear war.[26]

The United States began providing technical assistance to the French program in the early 1970s through the 1980s. The aid was secret, unlike the relationship with the British nuclear program. The Nixon administration, unlike previous presidencies, did not oppose its allies' possession of atomic weapons and believed that the Soviets would find having multiple nuclear-armed Western opponents more difficult. Because the Atomic Energy Act of 1946 prohibited sharing information on nuclear weapon design, a method known as "negative guidance" or "Twenty Questions" was used; French scientists described to their U.S. counterparts their research, and were told whether they were correct. Areas in which the French received help included MIRV, radiation hardening, missile design, intelligence on Soviet anti-missile defences, and advanced computer technology. Because the French program attracted "the best brains" of the nation, the U.S. benefited from French research as well. The relationship also improved the two countries' military ties; despite its departure from NATO's command structure in 1966, France developed two separate nuclear targeting plans, one "national" for the *Force de Frappe*'s role as a solely French deterrent, and one coordinated with NATO.[26]

France is understood to have tested neutron or enhanced radiation bombs in the past, apparently leading the field with an early test of the technology in 1967[27] and an "actual" neutron bomb in 1980.[a]

Testing

There were 210 French nuclear tests from 1960 through 1996. Seventeen of them were done in the Algerian Sahara between 1960 and 1966, starting in the middle of the Algerian War. One-hundred ninety-three were carried out in French Polynesia.[29][30]

A summary table of French nuclear testing by year can be read at this article: List of nuclear weapons tests of France.

Saharan experiments centres (1960–66)

After studying Réunion, New Caledonia, and Clipperton Island, General Charles Ailleret, head of the Special Weapons Section, proposed two possible nuclear test sites for France in a January 1957 report: French Algeria in the Sahara Desert, and French Polynesia. Although he recommended against Polynesia because of its distance from France and lack of a large airport, Ailleret stated that Algeria should be chosen "provisionally", likely due in part to the Algerian War.[31]

A series of atmospheric nuclear tests was conducted by the *Centre Saharien d'Expérimentations Militaires* ("Saharan Military Experiments Centre") from February 1960 until April 1961. The first, called *Gerboise Bleue* ("Blue jerboa") took place on 13 February 1960 in Algeria. The explosion took place at 40 km from the military base at Hammoudia near Reggane, which is the last town on the Tanezrouft Track heading south across the Sahara to Mali, and 700 km/435 mi. south of Béchar.[32] The device had a 70 kiloton yield. Although Algeria became independent in 1962, France was able to continue with underground nuclear tests in Algeria through 1966. The General Pierre Marie Gallois was named *le père de la bombe A* ("Father of the A-bomb").

Three further atmospheric tests were carried out from 1 April 1960 to 25 April 1961 at Hammoudia. Military, workers and the nomadic Touareg population of the region were present at the test sites, without any significant protection. At most, some took a shower after each test according to *L'Humanité*.[33] Gerboise Rouge (5kt), the third atomic bomb, half as powerful as Little Boy, exploded on 27 December 1960, provoking protests from Japan, USSR, Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria and Ghana.[34]

After the independence of Algeria on 5 July 1962, following the 19 March 1962 Evian agreements, the French military moved the test site to another location in the Algerian Sahara, around 150 km north of Tamnarasset, near the village of In Eker. Underground nuclear explosion testing was performed in drifts in the Taourirt Tan Afella mountain, one of the granite Hoggar Mountains. The Evian agreements included a secret article which stated that "Algeria concede[s]... to France the use of certain air bases, terrains, sites and military installations which are necessary to it [France]" during five years.

The C.S.E.M. was therefore replaced by the *Centre d'Expérimentations Militaires des Oasis* ("Military Experiments Center of the Oasis") underground nuclear testing facility. A total of 13 underground nuclear tests were carried out at the In Eker site from 7 November 1961 to 16 February 1966. By July 1, 1967, all French facilities were evacuated.

An accident happened on 1 May 1962, during the "Béryl" test, four times more powerful than Hiroshima and designed as an underground shaft test.[35] Due to improper sealing of the shaft, radioactive rock and dust were released into the atmosphere. Nine soldiers of the 621st Groupe d'Armes Spéciales unit were heavily contaminated by radiation.[36] The soldiers were exposed to as much as 600 mSv. The Minister of the Armed Forces, Pierre Messmer, and the Minister of Research, Gaston Palewski, were present. As many as 100 additional personnel, including officials, soldiers and Algerian workers were exposed to lower levels of radiation, estimated at 50 mSv, when the radioactive cloud produced by the blast passed over the command post, due to an unexpected change in wind direction. They escaped as they could, often without wearing any protection. Palewski died in 1984 of leukemia, which he always attributed to the Béryl incident. In 2006, Bruno Barrillot, specialist of nuclear tests, measured 93 microsieverts by hour of gamma ray at the site, equivalent to 1% of the official admissible yearly dose.[33] The incident was documented in the 2006 docudrama "*Vive La Bombe!*.[37]

Saharan facilities

- CIEES (*Centre Interarmées d'Essais d'Engins Spéciaux*, "Joint Special Vehicle Testing Center" in English): Hammaguir, 12 kilometres (7.5 mi) southwest of Colomb-Béchar, Algeria:

  used for launching rockets from 1947 to 1967.[38]

- C.S.E.M. (*Centre Saharien d'Expérimentations Militaires*): Reggane, west of In-Salah, Tanezrouft, Algeria:

  used for atmospheric tests from 1960 to 1961.

- C.E.M.O. (*Centre d'Expérimentations Militaires des Oasis*): In Ekker, in the Hoggar, 150 km/93 mi from Tamanrasset, Tan Afella, Algeria:

  used for underground tests from 1961 to 1967.

Pacific experiments centre (1966–1996)

Despite its initial choice of Algeria for nuclear tests, the French government decided to build Faa'a International Airport in Tahiti, spending much more money and resources than would be justified by the official explanation of tourism. By 1958, two years before the first Sahara test, France began again its search for new testing sites due to potential political problems with Algeria and the possibility of a ban on above-ground tests. Many French overseas islands were studied, as well as performing underground tests in the Alps, Pyrenees, or Corsica; however, engineers found problems with most of the possible sites in metropolitan France.[31]

By 1962 France hoped in its negotiations with the Algerian independence movement to retain the Sahara as a test site until 1968, but decided that it needed to be able to also perform above-ground tests of hydrogen bombs, which could not be done in Algeria. Mururoa and Fangataufa in French Polynesia were chosen that year. President Charles de Gaulle announced the choice on 3 January 1963, describing it as a benefit to Polynesia's weak economy. The Polynesian people and leaders broadly supported the choice, although the tests became controversial after they began, especially among Polynesian separatists.[31]

A total of 193 nuclear tests were carried out in Polynesia from 1966 to 1996. On 24 August 1968 France detonated its first thermonuclear weapon—codenamed Canopus—over Fangataufa. A fission device ignited a lithium-6 deuteride secondary inside a jacket of highly enriched uranium to create a 2.6 megaton blast.

Simulation programme (1996–2012)

More recently, France has used supercomputers to simulate and study nuclear explosions.

Current nuclear doctrine and strategy

French law requires at least one out of four nuclear submarines to be on patrol in the Atlantic Ocean at any given time, like the UK's policy.[39]

In 2006, French President Jacques Chirac noted that France would be willing to use nuclear weapons against a state attacking France by terrorism. He noted that the French nuclear forces had been configured for this option.[40]

On 21 March 2008, President Nicolas Sarkozy announced that France will reduce its aircraft deliverable nuclear weapon stockpile (which currently consists of 60 TN 81 warheads) by a third (20 warheads) and bring the total French nuclear arsenal to fewer than 300 warheads.[41][42]

France decided not to sign the UN treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.[43]

The French nuclear-powered aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle* and the American nuclear-powered carrier USS *Enterprise* (left), each of which carry nuclear-capable fighter aircraft

Anti-nuclear tests protests

Protests in Australia in 1996 against French nuclear tests in the Pacific

- In July 1959, after France announced that they would begin testing nuclear bombs in the Sahara, protests were held in Nigeria and Ghana, with the Liberian and Moroccan governments also denouncing the decision. On November 20, 1959, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution supported by 26 Afro-Asian countries expressing concern and requesting "France to refrain from such tests."[44]
- By 1968 only France and China were detonating nuclear weapons in the open air and the contamination caused by the H-bomb blast led to a global protest movement against further French atmospheric tests.[14]
- From the early 1960s New Zealand peace groups CND and the Peace Media had been organising nationwide anti-nuclear campaigns in protest of atmospheric testing in French Polynesia. These included two large national petitions presented to the New Zealand government which led to a joint New Zealand and Australian Government action to take France to the International Court of Justice (1972).[45]
- In 1972, Greenpeace and an amalgam of New Zealand peace groups managed to delay nuclear tests by several weeks by trespassing with a ship in the testing zone. During the time, the skipper, David McTaggart, was beaten and severely injured by members of the French military.
- In 1972 Australian unions placed bans on servicing Union de Transports Aériens planes to protest nuclear testing.[46]
- In 1973 the New Zealand Peace Media organised an international flotilla of protest yachts including the Fri, Spirit of Peace, Boy Roel, Magic Island and the Tanmure to sail into the test exclusion zone.[47]
- In 1973, New Zealand Prime Minister Norman Kirk as a symbolic act of protest sent two navy frigates, HMNZS *Canterbury* and HMNZS *Otago*, to Moruroa.[48] They were accompanied by HMAS *Supply*, a fleet oiler of the Royal Australian Navy.[49]
- In 1985 the Greenpeace ship *Rainbow Warrior* was bombed and sunk by the French DGSE in Auckland, New Zealand, as it prepared for another protest of nuclear testing in French military zones. One crew member, Fernando Pereira of Portugal, photographer, drowned on the sinking ship while attempting to recover his photographic equipment. Two members of

DGSE were captured and sentenced, but eventually repatriated to France in a controversial affair.

- French president Jacques Chirac's decision to run a nuclear test series at Mururoa in 1995, just one year before the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was to be signed, caused worldwide protest, including an embargo of French wine. These tests were meant to provide the nation with enough data to improve further nuclear technology without needing additional series of tests.[50]
- The French military conducted almost 200 nuclear tests at Mururoa and Fangataufa atolls over a thirty-year period ending in 1996, 46 of them atmospheric, of which five were without significant nuclear yield. In August 2006, an official French government report by INSERM confirmed the link between an increase in the cases of thyroid cancer and France's atmospheric nuclear tests in the territory since 1966.[51]

Veterans' associations and symposium

An association gathering veterans of nuclear tests (AVEN, "*Association des vétérans des essais nucléaires*") was created in 2001.[52] Along with the Polynesian NGO Moruroa e tatou, the AVEN announced on 27 November 2002 that it would depose a complaint against X (unknown) for involuntary homicide and putting someone's life in danger. On 7 June 2003, for the first time, the military court of Tours granted an invalidity pension to a veteran of the Sahara tests. According to a poll made by the AVEN with its members, only 12% have declared being in good health.[33] An international symposium on the consequences of test carried out in Algeria took place on 13 and 14 February 2007, under the official oversight of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika.

One hundred fifty thousand civilians, without taking into account the local population, are estimated to have been on the location of nuclear tests, in Algeria or in French Polynesia.[33] One French veteran of the 1960s nuclear tests in Algeria described being given no protective clothing or masks, while being ordered to witness the tests at so close a range that the flash penetrated through the arm he used to cover his eyes.[53] One of several veteran's groups claiming to organise those suffering ill effects, AVEN had 4,500 members in early 2009.[52]

Test victims compensation

In both Algeria and French Polynesia there have been long standing demands for compensation from those who claim injury from France's nuclear testing program. The government of France had consistently denied, since the late 1960s, that injury to military personnel and civilians had been caused by their nuclear testing.[54] Several French veterans and African and Polynesian campaign groups have waged court cases and public relations struggles demanding government reparations. In May 2009, a group of twelve French veterans, in the campaign group "Truth and Justice", who claim to have suffered health effects from nuclear testing in the 1960s had their claims denied by the government Commission for the Indemnification of Victims of Penal Infraction (CIVI), and again by a Paris appeals court, citing laws which set a statute of limitations for damages to 1976.[55] Following this rejection, the government announced it would create a 10m Euro compensation fund for military and civilian victims of its testing programme; both those carried out in the 1960s and the Polynesian tests of 1990–1996.[54] Defence Minister Hervé Morin said the government would create a board of physicians, overseen by a French judge magistrate, to determine if individual cases were caused by French testing, and if individuals were suffering from illnesses on a United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation list

of eighteen disorders linked to exposure to testing.[54][56] Pressure groups, including the Veterans group "Truth and Justice" criticised the programme as too restrictive in illnesses covered and too bureaucratic. Polynesian groups said the bill would also unduly restrict applicants to those who had been in small areas near the test zones, not taking into account the pervasive pollution and radiation.[57] Algerian groups had also complained that these restrictions would deny compensation to many victims. One Algerian group estimated there were 27,000 still living victims of ill effects from the 1960–66 testing there, while the French government had given an estimate of just 500.[58]

Chemical and biological weapons

France states that it does not currently possess chemical weapons. The country ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in 1995, and acceded to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) in 1984. France also ratified the Geneva Protocol in 1926.

During World War I, France, not Germany as commonly believed, was actually the first nation to use chemical weapons though this was notably a nonlethal tear gas attack (xylyl bromide) carried out in August 1914 against invading German troops. Once the war had degenerated into trench warfare and new methods to attain an advantage were sought, the German Army initiated a chlorine gas attack against the French Army at Ypres on 15 April 1915, initiating a new method of warfare but failed that day to exploit the resulting break in the French line. In time, the more potent phosgene replaced chlorine in use by armies on the Western Front, including France, leading to massive casualties on both sides of the conflict. As the war progressed, the effects were mitigated by development of protective clothing and masks.

At the outbreak of World War II, France maintained large stockpiles of mustard gas and phosgene but did not use them against the invading Axis troops, and no chemical weapons were used on the battlefield by the Axis invaders on the western front; Germany only employed chemical weapons against the people of the Soviet Union.[59]

During the invasion of France, German forces captured a French biological research facility and purportedly found plans to use potato beetles against Germany.[60]

Immediately after the end of the war, the French military began testing captured German chemical agent stores in Algeria, then a French department, notably the extremely toxic nerve agent Tabun. By the late 1940s, testing of Tabun-filled ordnance had become routine, often by using livestock to test effects.[61] The testing of chemical weapons occurred at B2-Namous, Algeria, an uninhabited desert proving ground located 100 kilometers (62 mi) east of the Moroccan border, but other sites also existed.[62][63] A manufacturing facility existed in Bouchet, near Paris, which was tasked with researching chemical weapons and maintaining a scientific and technological vigilance on the subject.[64]

In 1985, France was estimated to have a chemical weapons stockpile of some 435 tonnes, the second largest in NATO following the United States. However, at a conference in Paris in 1989, France declared that it was no longer in possession of chemical weaponry but maintained the manufacturing capacity to readily produce such weapons if deemed necessary.[65]

See also

- Anti-nuclear protests
- Force de frappe
- French 'Simulation' project (to replace live nuclear testing) (*in French, French Wikipedia*)
- List of states with nuclear weapons
- Moruroa
- New Zealand nuclear-free zone
- Weapons of mass destruction
- List of nuclear weapons tests of France

Notes

a. UK parliamentary question on whether condemnation was considered by Thatcher government.[28]

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External links

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- The Woodrow Wilson Center's Nuclear Proliferation International History Project (https://www.wilsoncenter.org/nuclear-history-documents) The Wilson Center's Nuclear Proliferation International History Project has primary source documents on US-French nuclear relations.

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